



# MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY!

After a couple of years of getting so far behind with our Holiday plans that we didn't send out any cards, we thought we'd get with the program this year. So here goes! (Although Sue thinks we lead boring lives, we are somehow so busy we can't do all the boring stuff we want to do.)

Miss Susan worked very hard all spring and summer of 2001 to earn her private pilot (airplane) certificate. She was scheduled for a check ride (her final exam) on Friday, September 14, 2001. Then, the Tuesday before her ride, the world changed.

Among many other things, our plane was grounded, along with most others. In addition to delaying Sue's check ride, the annual Michigan Air Tour, of which we were in charge, was disrupted more than somewhat. It still went on, but we had to drive.

Suddenly, the Coast Guard had a new emphasis on Homeland Security, and needed all the resources it could muster. Our Coast Guard Auxiliary aviation unit began flying at a pace like never before. While all other private aircraft at Grosse Ile Municipal Airport were grounded, we were flying almost every day, doing Coast Guard marine security patrols. Although the pace of these patrols has subsided now, we are still very busy with our CG missions. We're now working with other governmental agencies, such as Customs, INS and the Border Patrol, as the Coast Guard shares us as a resource with them.

Oh, and after a little longer wait than expected, on October 28, 2001, Sue took off for her check ride, and returned as Pilot Sue! Now there's no stoppin' her. For the past year now, Bob has to check before planning to fly the plane 'cause it just might be busy!

We're down to no kitties, now. In February, after 20 years, Bob's longtime buddy Rover moved on to the big sandbox in the sky. Bob said, "I knew him longer than most of the people in my life, and he was a better friend than many of the people in my life." It's taken a while to get used to coming home to an empty house, but then again, we can go away without having to arrange for someone to feed the critters. There's less barf on the carpet, too.

But time marches on, and so it was that Bob passed the half century mark this year. (Oddly, Sue has stayed the same age for the past several years. Hmmm.) As sort of an early birthday present, Bob got a new computer. It's a mighty, powerful and fast, fire breathing monster of a machine, and Bob was pleased, but quite surprised that Sue took an inordinate interest in learning how to use it to create and print documents. Little did he know. . .

Came Bob's big natal day, and he headed off to the airport to fly a Coast Guard patrol. Imagine his surprise when he opened the hangar and there, on the doors, in the helicopter, on the walls, in the john, on the 'fridge, on the storage cabinets. . . everywhere, was a "cute" little poster, with Bob's picture on it, announcing, "Hey, hey, look who's fifty today!" A helicopter cockpit filled with black balloons was the finishing touch. Cute. Very cute.

Later Bob went to work, at the big TV station as usual. As he walked into his office, one of his colleagues wished him a Happy Birthday. "Thanks", Bob replied, "But how did you know it was my birthday? I didn't tell anyone." "Oh, believe me," his colleague replied, "Everybody knows." And there on the office door was another of the same goofy posters as at the airport. And they were in the newsroom, in the engineering department, in the control rooms, in the johns, in the

garage, in the lunchroom, in the elevator, and even on the back door. Yup, everyone knew, thanks to Pilot Sue and her pal, the Birthday Fairy. No wonder the ink in the new printer was used up so quickly!

So Bob thought that was a pretty good gag, a one two punch of birthday silliness, and that it was all over. Nope! Imagine his surprise (again) when he woke up the next Saturday morning to see fifty tombstones (with big "50"s) all over the front lawn. Yikes! Good thing for Pilot Sue that she's stopped aging, 'cause paybacks are a bitch!

So life on our little Island of Paradise goes on, boring as ever. There's work, of course, Bob at the TV station and Sue at the Hospital, day after day. And there's Bob's other job running the Coast Guard AUXAIR program. And Sue's other job as Bob's assistant in the CG AUXAIR program, keeping him from screwing up. And there's her other job, of cleaning up after you know who. And then there's flying, sometimes slow, sometimes fast, sometimes half fast.

Next year we're planning a flying vacation, in which Pilot Sue will take Bob flying, rather than vice versa! We don't know where we're going yet, but getting there will be more than half the fun!

Best wishes to you and yours for a safe, meaningful and happy holiday season. And if it's a couple of years before we send out cards again, just remember, it's because life here is just too boring.

## *Pilot Bob & Pilot Sue*

